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AREA TRAINING PROGRAMS

PHILOSOPHY AND AIMS

Courses: The Language and External Training School (LETS) is beginning to develop courses (see model syllabi) on all foreign areas with intelligence significance for the United States. These courses will fall within the following categories:

The Basic Country Survey - a course on each major country and on each grouping of two or more minor countries.

The Regional Survey - a course on each world region or broad grouping of countries.

The Current Problems Seminar - a discussion of intelligence problems, as appropriate, centering on a particular country or region.

The "Americans Abroad" course on each major country or appropriate grouping of countries.

The "Omnibus Program" of comprehensive training, including language, on an individual country or appropriate grouping of countries.

Need: CIA's entire mission is focussed on foreign developments and situations which spring from the actions of foreign peoples responding to their environments. Hence, in order to comprehend, anticipate, or utilize these actions, a sound knowledge of the people involved, as well as of the places and things about them, is indispensable.

Such knowledge is deficient of course particularly in Americans, who until recent years found less need than other major nations for foreign area and language studies. As a result, Americans in general have a marked

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tendency to evaluate and anticipate the responses of foreign peoples on the basis of purely American criteria.

In CIA, only a small percentage of the personnel concerned with a particular area are believed to possess the minimum of area knowledge or familiarity essential for efficient fulfillment of their assignments. Evidence of this fact was abundant among the 73 employees who took Professor

25X1A5a1 [redacted] courses on the Far East, sponsored by LETS, in the summer of 1955; he was astounded at the lack of basic knowledge of this area in many who had official responsibilities connected with it. Such deficiencies are widespread in CIA probably because: (1) functional rather than area knowledge and experience are most often the determining factor in hiring personnel; (2) those with area specializations must often be utilized on jobs unconcerned with those specializations; and (3) even when employees do hold positions utilizing their area specializations, such knowledge is seldom current or balanced enough, or sufficiently geared to intelligence needs, for efficient job performance.

Supervisors throughout the Agency have no trouble in recalling specific--and perhaps costly--instances of employees with such handicaps. The good administrator or the good operator is shifted to a desk or a field post where these special talents are urgently needed, but his ignorance of the area concerned cannot be overcome quickly enough to prevent serious errors of judgment and perhaps even the ruin of operations long-abuilding. The economist or the scientist who may be an outstanding authority in his technical field may nevertheless tend to over-generalize when an empirical

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study of a particular case is called for; that is, he may be entirely lacking in the area experience necessary to evaluate or handle specific data or people in a specific locale. A case or desk officer, though he has excellent experience on a given area, may be even more of a liability than the functionalist if he is shifted to another area since he tends to carry over from one area to the other institutional and cultural patterns which no longer apply.

Above all, the CIA employee going out to a foreign post must by the nature of his business fit into the new environment as smoothly as possible. In order to be unobtrusive and yet be in a position to promote American objectives, he must possess a broad knowledge of---and a sensitivity to---the area, which the proposed courses will go far to supply. While some CIA employees have lived a total of many years in the country to which they are assigned, few of even these employees are believed to have ever had systematic training on their areas, which their increasing job responsibilities demand. Heretofore, CIA as a young and growing organization has sent out most of its field employees without showing adequate concern for their area and language training. Correction of this deficiency has been enjoined on CIA by the Clark Committee report.

Objectives: LETS therefore seeks to develop gradually the area training courses which a large number of Agency personnel appear to need with varying degrees of urgency. The Basic Country and the Regional Survey courses, as well as the Area Problems Seminar, will be tailored to the general needs of

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DDI, DDP, and DDS personnel; the Americans Abroad courses and the Omnibus Program will serve specialized needs of those employees of the three major components, who are preparing to go to the area concerned.

By definition, then, these courses will go well beyond the standard academic country survey. History, people, institutions, geography, and climate will be concisely presented as only the framework for further specialized discussion. For the DDI employee, current conditions, trends, and attitudes will be highlighted to clarify the present intelligence situation or predictive problems. The student from the DDS will be alerted, for example, to special characteristics of the economy--in transportation, communications, food supply, price trends--which may affect his CIA job activities. The DDP employee will profit, for example, from attention to popular attitudes, racial composition of the population, governmental processes, and legal system.

For all who take the courses, the goal will be to develop a sharper understanding of foreign areas and a greater skill in anticipating responses within them. In short, the aim is to develop a keener sensitivity to what is professionally significant in foreign areas, for effective intelligence work either within them or concerning them.

Intelligence-oriented area courses are not at present offered anywhere in the United States. For obvious security reasons they must be offered within an intelligence agency. They are being given increasing priority by a maturing CIA. With the relaxation of the cold war in the post-Geneva period, such courses are less of a luxury than before, and yet become

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more vital for the increasingly subtle, long-term struggle with the USSR for the confidence and support of foreign governments and populations.

Staff: In order to make the new area training program as efficient and realistic as possible, it is to be correlated closely with language training and administered by a staff which will tend toward bi-competency. Thus, under a proposed reorganization of LETS, the existing language training program will be coordinated with the new area program under three regional groups: The Western, The Slavic, and The Oriental. This arrangement for pooling talents should maximize LETS capabilities for providing coherent—and long-neglected—training on foreign peoples and their environments. In addition, experienced personnel from the DDI, DDP, and DDS will be invited as appropriate to lead discussions of the relationships of area considerations to their respective missions.

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